

Promising Practice: Job Placement Assistance

South Carolina Department of Social Services

Project HOPE

Job placement assistance is a service provided by the South Carolina Department of Social Services' Project HOPE, a Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance. Many students who are enrolled in the HPOG program need to make money to support their families and themselves while they are furthering their education and working toward higher-paying healthcare jobs, and job search assistance addresses this need.

Job developers on the South Carolina HPOG program staff visit the boot camps, the first step in the student's journey, during the first week. At that time individual student assessments are made, including review of the student's personal and financial situation to determine the best job fit. Job developers work with the students to develop résumés and complete generic work applications to demonstrate the students' work histories. They talk with the students to determine what kinds of jobs the students might be interested in that are compatible with their home locations, their transportation situations, and their childcare needs.

Job developers contact employers in the area to make them aware of the HPOG program and the services the program provides. Then they present résumés of the students to the employers. To prepare students for interviewing with employers, the program staff conducts mock interviews with students and talk with them about dressing for success and other skills necessary to successfully attain and retain jobs. The job developers forge good relationships with employers in healthcare and other industries in order to facilitate continued work opportunities for clients who are in the HPOG program. The employers are encouraged to call the program any time issues with HPOG students arise so that the staff can work with the students to resolve them.

It can be somewhat challenging to find employers that offer the flexible work hours needed for students' school attendance. It is necessary to have skilled job developers on the HPOG program staff, and they need to be good salespeople for the program and for the students. They also should be familiar with labor market information and understand the current job environment. The job developers can identify jobs that are compatible with part-time entry-level work so that the students can pursue an education and work at the same time.

In areas where there is more than one location for a business, such as stores that are part of a chain, it is most beneficial to establish the relationship with the corporate office for the chain. Employers are often enthusiastic to participate because of earned tax credits they can receive by hiring HPOG students, so that becomes a good selling point to make with employers.

To demonstrate the dedication and work ethic that the HPOG students bring, HPOG program staff informs the employers when students they have hired are working and attending school at

the same time. They also inform employers about what the program does to provide childcare and transportation support, assuring the employers that these issues will not negatively affect their new hires.

The South Carolina HPOG program has three job developers on staff. They maintain their own databases of employers specific to their assigned regions, but they also share their information across the staff. Some of the businesses Project HOPE works with for job placement purposes also support the program in other ways. For example, Subway provides food-only vouchers for students in the program but also is a potential employer of HPOG students.